

had not the wit to do until it was too late. 'The lords/ says Walsingham, 'remained quietly at home as though they were asleep, while the men of Kent and Essex swelled the ranks of their army.' The country towns and trading cities, where resistance might have been organised, were generally favourable to the rising. Often the Mayor and corporation, nearly always the lower class of citizens, used the opportunity of the rural rebellion to push claims of their own.¹ Without rally-ing-point, without leader, without plans, the landlord class looked helplessly on. The armed and disciplined forces of the population were isolated and cut off in detail, at the mercy of the unarmed but united rustics. The absurdity of the situation was the greater because the rebels were so ill prepared for warlike operations. The impression left, when the Rising was over, was that they had been seen going about * with sticks, rusty swords, battle-axes, bows coloured by smoke and age, with one arrow apiece, and often only one wing to the arrow. Among a thousand of such persons it was hard to find one armed man.'² Probably some were better equipped than the chronicler allows. The lower peasant classes, as well as the yeomanry, were intended by the legislators of the period to possess the long bow, and to practise it^c on Sundays and holidays and leave all playing of tennis and football/³ It was only by encouraging and enforcing habitual exercise in archery, that the recruiting ground for our armies in France could be maintained in its excellence. Many of the rebels must therefore have been practised shots. But the English Bowman, unless he was an old soldier, would be useless without discipline or leaders, especially if one among a vast mob of other rustics less well equipped than himself. At any rate, when real resistance began, the rioters gave way at the first shock of the men-at-arms.

It was not possible for all gentlemen, during this reign of terror, to watch for the abating of the waters safe in the seclusion of their homes* In the second week of June, manor-houses were broken open and sacked by mobs, on whose merest whim

¹ Leicester excepted, Knighton, it, 142-3

² "Wals., i, 454; Froiss., ii. 469; *Cont. Eulog.*, 353; *Mon. Eye.*, 24; *Vox Clam.*, bk. i., cap. xii.

³ *Stats. of Realm*, 12 B. II. cap. &